A Psychoanalytical Study of Crime in the Booker Prize Winning Novels by Three Indian Authors

A

Synopsis

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Introduction

A psychoanalytical study explores the human psyche and its true nature, it investigates and dives into a deeper understanding of the texts and characters. This study of crime explores the psychological elements that provide the characteristics of criminal behavior, strong involvement, and active participation in criminal activity. However, it finds out the dual nature of the texts and the characters. This approach assists us in exploring unconscious desires, childhood memories, and conflicts that may add to any individual's involvement in criminal activities.

Before delving into the realm of psychological study and criminal activity it is important to know the actual definition of Psychology and Crime. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, the meaning of crime is "an illegal act for which someone can be punished by the government." According to Wikipedia," a Crime is an unlawful act punishable by a state or other authority." It is still disputed whether a study of Psychology is scientific or not but many researchers have given their opinion that it is the scientific study of the mind and behavior of human beings. In 1884, James Sully defined psychology as the science of the 'inner world' as distinguished from physical science which studies physical phenomena. Sigmund Freud not only invented a whole new discipline and medical mode of psychoanalysis but also generated concepts and ideas that have enormously impacted literary criticism (Nayar, 92).

At the center of Freud's concern for repressed sexual desire is his idea of the Oedipal Complex, in which he explains that it happens at an unconscious level. Repression is the hiding away of something in our minds; what is hidden away exists in our unconscious (Nayar, 94)." It happened in the novel *The God of Small Things* when Baby Kochamma's unrequited love for an Irish monk turned her into a bitter and jealous old woman. Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis reveals the deeper layers of meaning in

the novels, particularly in how human beings build their identity and find their way into the complexities of their worlds. Lacan's given concept of the Mirror Stage involves the emergence of the "I" as individuals have started to see themselves as separate beings. Characters like Sai and Biju experience the Mirror Stage as they defy their identities amidst cultural displacement. Jungian theory of psychoanalysis such as the shadow, anima/ animus, and individuation, helps in the better understanding of the characters' criminal actions in these novels.

The Defense Mechanism is a psychological way used by an individual unconsciously to deal with stress and anxiety and it protects from tormenting thoughts or feelings for instance we can look into the past thoughts and memories of the character Judge, grandfather of Sai in the novel *The Inheritance of Loss*. It helps to manage internal conflicts and protect self-esteem. Another term 'abjection' came into being in the works of Julia Kristeva, a French critic. According to her "abjection' is what is rejected by society but it also has the power to force change, by pushing people beyond their comfort." It is socially unacceptable just like the relationship between Ammu and Velutha because he was an untouchable and to love above his limit was a crime and he had to pay the price with his life.

In this contemporary world, it is noticeable that people have started explaining criminal activities and also giving justification for it or they are showing their criminal acts as heroic deeds or trying to project it to us so that we will feel sorry for them or even pity on them. In the novel The White Tiger we see how Balram Halwai narrates his criminal activity and explains his experience very proudly. Arvind Adiga has offered his novel and its character to criticize and mock contemporary Indian society and through the lens of Balram Halwai, he had successfully showed the dark side of the current society. Through the Psychoanalytical study of all the characters, authors will

help us to understand the complexity of the time and through it, we can acquire insights into the complexities underlying their criminal behavior, and also the socio-cultural components that give choices and shape their identities. The study of the mind of the characters from the perspective of crime can expose underlying conflicts, motivations, and psychological dynamics that control their actions.

This research will be closely associated with the novels Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*, and Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*. These novels excellently exposed how the psychological minds of the characters left their impact on the readers. All these novels and their writers have successfully depicted how social hierarchy, globalization, and the effects of family and societal behavior on the characters construct their behavior in certain ways that they are compelled to become the villains of society and commit crimes.

Suzanna Arundhati Roy is an Indian author, often involved in political and human rights and also in environmental causes. She won the Booker Prize in 1997 for her postmodern classic novel *The God of Small Things*. Roy is also associated with screenplay and television serials and also worked in movies. She has contributed to non-fiction works and also gave her point of view on many political movements and rights. Roy has written two novels till now and *The God of Small Things* is one of them. She mostly and effectively talks about the cast division, religious diversity, and effects of colonialism even after independence and globalization.

Roy's debut novel *The God of Small Things (1997)* is a direct comment on the nation's contemporary society and political issues. She has used the concept of "small things" as the central theme of this novel and shows the clash between 'the big things and small things.' The novel tells the tragic story of a Syrian Christian family in Kerala because of their misdeed and transgressions. The story starts with fraternal twins Estha

and Rahel and how they are separated from each other and lose the only guide of their life, Ammu, who loved them "more than double (149)." Ammu was frustrated with her parents Papachi and Mammachi (Papachi had a soft heart for everyone in the society but in the house, he was a wife beater and also beat his daughter) hastily marries a drunkard, and after marriage, she realized that she "had jumped from the frying pan into the fire (74)." After that, she had an affair with a Paravan (Untouchable) Velutha. Baby Kochamma was a spinster and always disliked Ammu and the twins. Chacko was a divorcee and had a daughter who drowned in the river and died. Velutha was accused of the murder and beaten to death by the Police who knew that he was innocent. Characters of this novel suffered either from marginalization or separation due to various causes and Roy also shed light on the inequalities appreciated by society and injustices that continued despite India's independence from British rule.

Kiran Desai, the most influential author, came to prominence with her outstanding novel The Inheritance of Loss, which won the prestigious accolade Booker Prize in 2006. Like Roy she has also written two novels and The Inheritance of Loss was one of them. Anita Desai who was also a novelist known for her novel In Custody, is the mother of Kiran Desai. She is known for her exploration of various themes related to the impact of colonialism, globalization, displacement, and cultural identity on society and communities. Her way of telling views and narratives often unfolds the psychological condition of the characters and their current situation captures their hopes, and fears, and contradicts them with depth and sensitivity. Through her novels, she allows her readers to explore a journey and offers deep insight into the complexities of the characters and the human mind in this ever-changing world.

Kiran Desai's novel *The Inheritance of Loss (2006)* is a tour de force that seizes the complexities of life in post-colonial India. Through the exploration of characters,

the novel explores various psychological problems that her characters suffer like depression, fear of their own life, regrets, and financial stress, and their influence on the lives of characters from diverse backgrounds, and discusses themes of social hierarchy, cultural identity, legacies of colonialism, and globalization. The novel reveals the story of a young woman Sai, who lives with her grandfather, the Judge, in the foothills. There is a shift in the lives of these characters after the arrival of a Nepali tutor named Gyan. Sai and Gyan build a romantic relationship. Simultaneously, the novel follows the life of Biju, the cook's son who is searching for an opportunity in America but finds himself trapped in the cruel reality of immigrant life. Through the flashback, we learn about the Judge's past life. Gyan joined a Nepali movement, that movement was spreading insurgencies in north-east India and filled the relationship between Sai and him with tension and anxiety. Tension becomes apparent between them because of their cultural and political differences. Meanwhile, the Judge struggles with feelings of alienation and yearns for the colonial past. In the novel, the crimes that have been committed by the characters are not solely acts of survival but they are an indication of the broader social and economic forces play.

Arvind Adiga is an accomplished and remarkable Indian author known for his analytical and incisive writing style and acute observation of people and contemporary Indian society. He is a versatile writer and a journalist, and also a winner of the 2008 Booker Prize for his debut novel *The White Tiger*. Among several other works that have been written by Adiga, The White Tiger is one of the best novels. He has also written some non-fiction works and essays. Adiga often makes use of a straightforward narrative that permits him to dive into the deeper minds of the characters and allows him to explore complex themes and social issues. He has the ability to create a

memorable character that leaves a great impact on his readers. He has raised important political and societal issues of the current society through his characters.

Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* is narrated in the form of letters in which Balram is unfolding his journey to the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, who is about to visit India. Adiga's primary motive for writing this novel is to expose the despotic inequality and injustices that were happening in the developing and globalized Indian society. The novel delves into its characters' psychology and their crimes. In the beginning, the story is narrated by the protagonist Balram Halwai, a self-made "entrepreneur" who belongs to a small village and is the son of a rickshaw puller, rises from rags to riches and becomes a successful businessman in the crowded city of Delhi. The central concept of the novel refers to the transformation of the character Balram from a suppressed servant (the lamb) to a deceiving and ambitious entrepreneur (the White Tiger). The actions of Balram are driven by a desire to get freedom and escape the oppressive restriction of the lower-class society which was controlling his destiny as a successful businessman.

Problems to be Investigated

In the entangled tapestry of contemporary literature, the portrayal of crime through a psychoanalytical lens offers a fascinating exploration of the human psyche, societal dynamics, and the complexities of moral ambiguity. The key problems in the novel The God of Small Things are finding out how internal conflicts, repressed emotions, and subconscious desires contribute to the criminal activities of the characters. The White Tiger explores how political, and social structures as well as caste/ class oppression influence the mind of the character and push them to engage in criminal activity. The central problem of the novel *The Inheritance of Loss* is about to reveal the problem that how dysfunctional family dynamics give fuel to feelings of

anger and rebellion or how the influence of family relationships and childhood traumas contribute to provoking an individual to indulge in criminal activity

Aims & Objectives of the Study

The aims and objectives of this research are

1. To find out the psychoanalytical concepts such as the unconscious mind (also Id, Ego, and Superego), repression, trauma, and desire manifest in the portrayal of criminal behavior *in The God of Small Things, The Inheritance of Loss, and The White Tiger* and critically analyze all novels.
2. To investigate how traumatic experiences, childhood trauma, and unresolved conflicts contribute to the development of criminal tendencies in the characters of these novels.
3. To observe the cultural, historical, and sociopolitical elements that influence the representation of crime and criminality in these novels and how they intersect with psychoanalytical interpretation and understand their impacts on human behavior.
4. Explore narrative techniques and literary theories of the authors within the novels such as Postcolonialism, modernism, Postmodernism, symbolism, imagery, and point of view to convey the psychological complexities of criminal behavior in their characters.

Research Hypothesis

This research will deal with the criminal behavior of the characters *from The God of Small Things, The Inheritance of Loss, and The White Tiger*, but this research has the answer to the most important questions i.e. What drives some people to commit a crime, and what goes through a criminal's mind to act in a certain way and what kind of society breeds such people. These all can be understood and analyzed through psychoanalytical concepts such as repression, desire, and trauma. This hypothesis

further suggests that the characters' criminal actions in the novels are influenced by psychological elements such as inequality in society, traumatic experiences, unspeakable fantasy, and unfulfilled desires.

According to some researchers, certain hormonal imbalances also create destruction in society, for example, when a person is doing something that he likes some Dopamine is released in his body which provides him satisfaction. Sometimes people carry unspeakable and suppressed desires and fantasies about a person which give them the motive to dislike or hate a particular person and whatever they had desire or fantasy that were not fulfilling so they develop a certain perception about that person. Some traumatic incidents and fears from childhood also haunt even after overcoming that situation because they are not easily forgettable.

Research Methodology

Methods that will be relevant for this research will give a genuine and authentic idea about it and the novels that have been chosen, will be studied closely and in-depth.

- This is qualitative research and utilizes qualitative research methods such as thematic analysis, discourse analysis, and narrative analysis to interpret the textual data and draw insights about the portrayal of crime from a psychoanalytical perspective.
- Ethical considerations in any research give it transparency. This research acknowledges the cultural context of the novels and communities that authors depicted and discussed, have some sensitive details so this research ensures that it will not reveal any sensitive details that can harm any society or community.
- The interdisciplinary approach provides integrated insights from, psychology, literary theory, sociology, and cultural studies to enrich the analysis of crime and psychoanalytical themes in the novels.

- Theoretical framework provides a foundation for this research such as the unconscious mind, repression, desire, psychosexual development, and trauma to analyze and study the psychoanalytical study of crime in *The God of Small Things, The Inheritance of Loss, and The White Tiger*.
- This research will also conduct a close textual analysis of all selected novels to identify instances of criminal behavior and explore psychological motivation and implications behind them. It will pay attention to narrative techniques, character development, symbolism, and thematic elements related to crime and psychoanalytical themes.
- To give an effective motive this research will conduct a comparative analysis. It will compare as well as contrast the portrayal of crime and psychoanalytical themes across the three novels, identifying similarities, differences, and patterns in the representation of criminal behavior and its psychological supports.

Tools to be Used

This research has involved intensive use of sources and materials as it is qualitative so, the tools to be used in this research are library material, a close reading of all three original texts, online study, reference material on the internet, books, journals, scholarly articles, and experts from interviews. This study leads to various clues for further research and investigation that can assist in future research.

Purpose of the Study

Through the lens of psychoanalytical theories, this research shed light on the motivations, behaviors, and psyche of characters involved in criminal activities depicted in selected novels. Each novel offers a rich tapestry of characters and themes that can be analyzed through a psychoanalytical point of view, providing valuable insights into

the human condition and the complexities of crime within specific cultural and socio-political contexts.

1. The significance of this novel *The God of Small Things* is to examine how psychoanalytical concepts such as repression, trauma, and Oedipus complex manifest in the characters' actions, especially considering the societal norms and family dynamics in Kerala, India.

2. The purpose of the novel *The Inheritance of Loss* involves examining the psychological effects of colonialism, displacement, and cultural identity on the characters, particularly through concepts like cultural alienation, identity crisis, and internalized oppression.

3. The main significance of this novel *The White Tiger* is to analyze the protagonist Balram's psyche through a psychoanalytical lens, exploring concepts like id, ego, and superego in his journey from meek to ambitious, from subservience to rebellion and forcing him towards criminal activities. In this research, the purpose is to understand how socioeconomic disparities and the oppressive structures of the Indian caste system shape the minds of the other characters.

Literature Review

What affects a criminal to act in a particular way? To describe the process that helps the criminal values be taken over by the individual Sutherland (1937) says:

"Criminal behavior is learned with the interaction of others who have already incorporated criminal values and illegitimate opportunities including conditions favorable to the learning of such a role."

Crime is as old as the beginning of the life of human beings. The first criminal or murderer according to Genesis 4:8 the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, killed his brother Abel and committed a crime which is referred to as homicide in Criminal

law. Earlier the common criminal act was taking the life of someone, it was regarded as a serious crime. However, knowledge of crime and understanding of the act of crime have come after the Enlightenment in Europe.

Most serious crimes fall into three broader categories: Crime against Person, Crime against Property, and Crime against Morality. Under the category of crime against a person comes domestic violence, child abuse, and wife-battering. Theft is the most common of all crimes against property and crimes against morality are the most controversial category some Examples are non-violent crimes like gambling, trafficking of drugs, lying, bribery, injustice, exploitation, etc.

Sigmund Freud's personality analysis says that some traumatic memories and experiences, which have occurred during infancy and childhood could affect an adult personality (Freud, 1933). Some psychologists believe that Criminals are not born they are made but some criminal behaviors are inherited while others say it is acquired from their surroundings. It can be said that the behavior and nature of human beings change as they go through several things and circumstances in their society. In one line we can say that they are the product of their environment and the source of crime and violence can be found deeply rooted within the social structure as observed from a sociological perspective for example: poverty, unequal, opportunity, exploitation, and deceit by the ruling class (Marx, 1984).

Sometimes criminals are not even aware of the reason behind their crimes. This kind of activity comes under psychological problems like – Kleptomaniacs, hate-criminals, passion offenders, jealousy, and insane offenders. Somehow it has a close link between existential ideas and criminal behavior's involvement with existential crises like the quest for freedom, loneliness, and absurdity.

It can also attempt to define crime from an existential perspective, i.e., how existential ideas lead the characters from *The White Tiger and The Inheritance of Loss* to commit a violent crime. Existentialism covers both psychological and sociological elements. It reveals how human desires lead to self-destruction. A man's free will and choices in his life shape his future and change his destiny. Morality and ethical acts are also connected with crime because when a person loses his morality through jealousy, hatred, and temptation, the crime arises. The moment morality declines, crime rises. The White Tiger novel records positive and negative sides that include social evils of society. It also centralizes globalization and its effects on Indian people and society (Rao,164).

The novels *God of Small Things and The Inheritance of Loss* indicate the same theme directly or indirectly: Postcolonialism. "Postcolonial theory is concerned with how texts- not just fictional texts of all kinds- shape our understanding of the colonized world, both historically and in the present (Sara Upstone,194)." Both novels cover the impact of post-colonialism on society and can be seen through the characters' actions. Marginalization, identity crisis, hybridity, mimicry, multiculturalism, existential questions, and migration are important components of post-colonialism.

The main issues that all three authors have taken are the unacceptance of the lower class by society, suppression of the subordinate class by the elite society, and traumatic experiences from the past that are still haunting. All these experiences lead the path of only one thing which is crime, violence, and revolt, and almost all these are stunningly depicted by Arvind Adiga in his *The White Tiger*. Sujata S. remarks, "The White Tiger…a political novel…churns out a comprehensive picture of the rich and the poor equally affected by the social and political system of a country that is going global (Sujatha S. 2009:70)."

In *The God of Small Things,* Arundhati Roy expresses the situation of women after Independence and the condition of lower-class people known as paravan (untouchable). Rao states that 'hybridity is a natural and important element of post-colonialism.' Kiran Desai has herself experienced postcolonial elements and multiculturalism, displacement, and dislocation and she writes with her insights. In the novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, Kiran Desai uses a multilayered narrative to show the interconnection between all the characters and raises not only local issues but also global issues by portraying the condition of the characters. So, through the works of all three writers, we can peek into the minds of the characters portrayed in all novels.

Research Gap

Despite the so much literature analysis on these novels *The White Tiger, The Inheritance of Loss, and The God of Small Things* from various perspectives, yet remains a significant gap in the application of psychoanalytic theory to the study of crime within these texts. This research aims to fill this gap by conducting a holistic psychoanalytic analysis of crime in the novels The White Tiger by Arvind Adiga, The Inheritance of Loss by Kiran Desai, and The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy.

Plan of the Work

This research is anticipated to be divided into the following chapters:

Chapter I: Introduction

Chapter II: Treatment of Crime in Literature: A Review

Chapter III: Repression, Trauma, and Crime in The God of Small Things

Chapter IV: Moral Ambivalence and Crime in The Inheritance of Loss

Chapter V: Existential Crisis and Crime in The White Tiger

Chapter VI: Conclusion

Select Bibliography

Chapter Division

Chapter I: Introduction

This Chapter will give a glimpse of a deep and effective understanding of psychoanalytical theories and crime to understand each novel from these perspectives. It is the introduction of each novel and its characters with the viewpoint of psychology and Crime. This part is the beginning of every theory like how the theory psychoanalytic started in English literature. How its implication became prominent in the literature. This chapter will go deeper into the realm of psychological study to understand not only the text but also get a better understanding of the character's activity. It will also provide an overview of the modern age from where it had all started and the postmodern age in which age this theory was prominent as well as its kinds like Stream of consciousness.

Chapter II: Treatment of Crime in Literature: A Review

This chapter offers an investigation into a deeper sense of the concept of Crime and its implication in the literature with the understanding of the psychoanalytical theory. This chapter will analyze the use of the concept of crime across the literature and observe their behavior and the reason behind those criminal activities. It will tell the actual meaning of Crime and reveal that crime is not new but as old as man himself. It is connected with psychological theory and this is the reason Freud has discussed it in his works. Somehow it has been seen that not only psychological but also cultural and societal rules and regulations play a huge role in producing a criminal and because of their conservative minds and evil behavior towards the lower class give birth to a criminal.

Chapter III: Repression, Trauma, and Crime in *The God of Small Things*

This chapter will share the psychological and sociological elements that give a spark to criminal activity. It will introduce the author of this novel and her other

contributions to society. This chapter will provide some clarification related to the characters portrayed in this novel for example What drives Baby Kochamma to act in a certain way to Ammu and Velutha or What was going on in the mind of Pappachi while beating his wife. Why does society always blame the suppressed lower class for always being a criminal or indulging in criminal activity? Why a woman can not live in a society as free as a man? It will also discuss how the relationship between Ammu and Velutha which was taboo and unacceptable by the society, leads to the complication and unethical turn in the novel.

Chapter IV: Moral Ambivalence and Crime in *The Inheritance of Loss*

This chapter will introduce contemporary international issues such as globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality, and terrorist violence. It will also explain all the theories used by the author to give it a fine touch and make it a remarkable work. It is necessary to understand how a man's current situation and circumstances can affect his behavior and how the traumatic experience can change a person from the inside and it compels him to commit a crime knowingly or unknowingly. The character of Gyan in the novel was also inspired by the current movement that was going on in the novel. Eventually, all the characters are suffering from various pain and they can't even admit it or share it with anyone however their actions reveal it by themselves.

Chapter V: Existential Crisis and Crime in *The White Tiger*

Discussion of the writer and his other works will happen here with detailed analysis. Through this chapter, we will get a glimpse of the idea of a new India and give a new but important aspect of the master-servant relationships. This chapter will provide an overview of the term 'anti-hero' which has been portrayed by the author himself. This chapter will give an interesting understanding of the character Balram and how he became a cunning person at the end of the novel from a meek and suppressed servant.

What motivation did he get from society and from his community that he acted in this way and compelled to become a murderer of the person once he appreciated and considered him as his ideal? It will explore the theoretical framework of modernism, existentialism, and postmodernism in depth.

Chapter VI: Conclusion

This chapter will deal with the major ideas and use of criminality in the novels that have occurred in the characters' lives and major incidents that have brought changes in their life and society. In *The White Tiger*, Balram's act of brutally murdering his master was the result of his growing awareness of the social injustices around him, his own experiences of humiliation and exploitation, and his deep desire for freedom. *The God of Small Things* shows the cruelty of that time when people used to judge by caste but not by their behavior and this chapter will discuss how the mind of an individual can get affected by surroundings and how central crime in the novel revolves around the forbidden love between Ammu and Velutha. In the novel *The Inheritance of Loss*, crime is depicted not just as a symptom of deeper socio-political issues which can be seen by the character of Gyan and how his relationship with Sai got impacted after he got involved in the movement and the character of Judge reveal how past injustices shape present actions and mentality and his internalized colonial mentality was the result of mental traumas.

Indeed, Crime can not just vanish from society, everyone can't behave in the same manner, and no one can prevent bad things or bad situations to happen with us. Sometimes marginalized and suppressed people think that crime is the only way to cope with societal injustices and personal grievances but what we can do is, we can understand the situation, control our actions, and also evaluate our reactions before doing it.

Significance of the Work

Present research delves into psychoanalytical perspectives on Crime as portrayed in *The God of Small Things, The Inheritance of Loss, and The White Tiger*. Today, these novels remain relevant as they offer insights into the complexities of human behavior, societal structures, and the underlying psychological motivations behind criminal acts. By analyzing these texts through a psychoanalytic lens, this research can contribute to a deeper understanding of how individual's past experiences, desires, and subconscious drives influence their actions, shedding light on contemporary issues such as social inequality, power dynamics, and cultural identity. Furthermore, this study can enrich present knowledge by connecting literary analysis with psychological theories, offering interdisciplinary insights into the nature of crime and its portrayal in literature.

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